



## Lawmaking in the U.S. | Lesson Plan

What are the key stages in the legislative process of the United States?

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Students will learn about the intricacies of the American legal system, focusing on how laws are conceived, developed, and implemented. They will gain insights into the legislative process and recognize the balances that must be made within the context of the U.S. Constitution.

### Learning Objectives:

- Explain the primary stages involved in the legislative process in the United States, including bill proposal, committee review, and the roles of both Congressional houses.
- Differentiate between the concepts of freedom and legal constraints, understanding how laws are designed to balance these elements.
- Describe the constitutional foundations that guide the lawmaking process, emphasizing the significance of the Constitution in shaping federal and state legislation.
- Analyze the impact of laws on individual rights and freedoms, discussing the importance of a balanced approach in legislative development.

### Key Vocabulary:

- **Bill:** A proposal for new legislation introduced in Congress.
- **Committee Review:** A critical stage where proposed bills are examined, debated, and amended before being voted on.
- **Majority Support:** The requirement for a bill to progress within the legislative process, indicating it has received more votes in favor than against.
- **Veto:** The president's power to reject a bill passed by Congress, which a two-thirds majority in both houses can override.
- **Pocket Veto:** A means by which the president can veto a bill by taking no action on it when Congress is not in session.
- **Supreme Court:** The highest federal court in the U.S., with the authority to declare laws unconstitutional.

**Educational Standards:** CCRA.L.1, CCRA.L.2, CCRA.L.4, CCRA.L.5, CCRA.SL.1, CCRA.SL.2, CCRA.R.4, CCRA.R.6

**Academic Subject Areas:** Civics, U.S. History, Western Civilization

### What You'll Need

- Video: *Lawmaking in the U.S.* (Watch [Here](#))
- Worksheet: *Street Smarts: Lawmaking in the U.S.* (Click [Here](#))
- Index cards with different roles written on them (President, Senators, House Representatives, Supreme Court Justices)
- A simple bill proposal written on a piece of paper

Scan to watch episode:



## Lesson Plan (45 minutes)

### Warm Up: (15 minutes)

1. Distribute role cards randomly among the students, ensuring representation of the different parts of the legislative process (some students can be Senators, others Representatives, one can be the President, and a few can be Supreme Court Justices).
2. Present a hot topic bill proposal, something that sparks strong debate, to the class (e.g., "A bill to ban cell phones at school"). Allow students a moment to read it over.
3. Senators and Representatives discuss the bill's merits and drawbacks. Encourage debate and discussion, mimicking the real legislative process.
4. After the debate, have the Senators and Representatives vote on whether to pass the bill.
5. If the bill passes, it goes to the student playing the President, who decides whether to sign it into law or veto it.
6. If the bill becomes law, the Supreme Court Justices can review it for constitutionality upon a challenge.
7. Wrap up the activity by discussing what happened during the role-play, highlighting the complexities and checks and balances of the legislative process. Discuss how each role contributed to the final outcome of the bill.
8. Give each student a copy of the *Street Smarts: Lawmaking in the U.S.* worksheet and display it on a screen.

### Watch and Complete: (20 minutes)

1. Watch the video as a class, answering the blanks on the worksheet as each question is addressed in the video.
2. Pause the video after each key question and concept is presented. Encourage students to share their answers to check for accuracy.

### Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)

1. After the video, allow students to ask questions or express their opinions about what they learned about lawmaking in the United States.
2. Conclude with a class discussion about the importance of lawmaking in the U.S. To encourage students to use the proper vocabulary during the discussion, have students keep track on a sheet of paper the number of times they can correctly incorporate key vocabulary in their responses and give themselves a point each time they use the word correctly. Award the student who has the most points with a classroom cheer.
3. Collect the completed worksheet as a formative assessment or participation credit.

## Don't have time for the full lesson? Quick Activity (15 minutes)

Distribute the worksheet and allow students to complete it while they follow along with the video.